

A Short Essay on the Excuse of Ignorance

Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Aziz
at-Tuwayla‘i

A Brief Exposition About the Issue of Excusing Others Due to the Presence of Ignorance

Author: ‘Abdul-‘Aziz at-Tuwayla‘i (may Allah have mercy upon him)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

All praise belongs to Allah; and may the *salah* and *salam* [of Allah] be upon the Messenger of Allah. As for what follows:

Indeed, from the matters where differences and mistakes have increased is the issue of ‘*al-‘udhr bil-jabl* (the excuse of ignorance)’ in *asl ad-din* (the foundation of the *din*). Many of those who view that the ignorant one who commits major *shirk* is excused, makes the basis and reason for that his affiliation to Islam and his claim that he is from the *Muslimin*. Therefore, if he worshipped other than Allah, made *du‘a* to other than Allah, sacrificed to other than Allah, and was raised upon that since his birth till his death and would profess with his tongue: “I am a Muslim,” he would consider him to be from the *Muslimin*. But if he worshipped other than Allah, made *du‘a* to other than Allah, sacrificed to other than Allah, and would profess with his tongue: “I am upon the way that Allah has commanded me to be upon,” he would not excuse him. This is without any doubt a contradiction.

If the comparison between the grave-worshippers and the idol worshippers is brought to his attention, and not excusing either one of them due to ignorance, he makes the affiliation to Islam the difference [between the two]. Due to this affiliation he rules upon the idol worshipper with *kufr* and judges the grave worshipper with Islam.

‘Affiliation to Islam,’ if it meant solely ascribing to Islam without the rest of the obligations, then, it is a ruling without any proof; and if it means ascribing to the *din* of Allah, the Exalted and Majestic, whether that affiliation was to the Islam which Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was sent with or to Judaism or Christianity or other laws which the Messengers were sent with, the one who says this statement must rule the ignorant ones among the Jews and Christians and other than them with Islam. Because they attribute themselves to the *din* of Allah which He ordered them to follow and fell into nullifiers due to ignorance. And whoever excuses them has disbelieved, left fold of Islam, and denied the authentic and explicit textual evidences.

In effect, he must rule upon the *mushrikin* of Quraysh with Islam before the advent of the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), because they said, according to what they claimed and assumed, that they are upon the way Ibrahim (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They had some obligations and rulings taken from him such as Hajj, circumcision, exalting the rites. They acknowledged that Allah is the Lord with no partners with Him in creating, sustaining, bringing to life, and causing death. However, they committed *shirk* with Allah, by worshipping others so they can bring them closer to Allah, believing that Allah has permitted them to be an intermediary on His behalf and between Him and His creation. Allah is high exalted from what they claim.

The grave worshipers are exactly like them in all respects, except that the grave worshippers attribute themselves to the Seal of the Prophets while the other ignorant ones attributed themselves to Ibrahim (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Both are equal. The grave worshippers will have no benefit in following the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) or adhering to some of his obligations in the *din*, just as the *kuffar* of Quraysh had

no benefit in following Ibrahim (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) or adhering to some of his obligations in the *din*.

Affiliation to Islam differs in some angles with affiliation to the way of Ibrahim, and some of the obligations which they abide by in worship differs, more or less, but it does not make a difference in the affirmation *iman* and *kufr* and acknowledging the *rububiyyah* of Allah. Both parties are disbelievers in Allah; outside the fold of Islam; emitted from the *din*...

In fact, the grave-worshippers claim that what they are doing is what Allah and His messenger (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) has ordered, similar to the statement of the *mushrikin* in time of ignorance, as Allah, the Exalted and Majestic, said about them:

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءُنَا وَاللّٰهُ أَمْرَنَا

“And when they commit abomination, they say, ‘We found our fathers doing it, and Allah has ordered us to do it’”¹

This is the proof of the overwhelming majority of the *mushrikin* amongst the grave-worshippers today. I met with one of the major leaders from the people of *shirk* performing ‘umrah. He used the same proof of the first *kuffar* and said: “It is not allowed for you to rebuke what the people (i.e., grave-worshippers) are practicing, because they took it from their fathers, and there’s no doubt that they (also) took it from their fathers, and the successors took it from the Salaf. So, then, it (is taken) from the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).” This is exactly what is mentioned in the *ayah* about the proofs of the *mushrikin* in two distinct ways:

1. That they found their forefathers practicing it.
2. That Allah has ordered them to do it.

¹ Surah al-A’raf: 28.

Hafidh ibn Kathir (*rahimahullah*) stated: “And they believe that the practice of their forefathers is traced back to a command from Allah and the law.” And even though this is in the context of an abomination, which was interpreted as being their *tawaf* around the Ka’bah naked, it is indicative of the practice of their forefathers being cited as an evidence. It is their assumption that the practice of their forefathers is stemmed back to a legislated matter from Allah.

This mistake, as it occurs with some of the opponents in the issue of ‘*al-‘udbr bil-jahl*’, from the students of knowledge, occurs in abundance from the laymen in excusing the stubborn individual that ascribes himself to Islam. Thus they do not declare *takfir* of the one who ascribes himself to Islam, at all. As a matter of fact, I heard from some of those who were called ‘*Du‘at as-Sahwah*’ (revivalist preachers), when was asked about the likes of Hafidh al-Asad and the Arab *tawaghit* amongst the apostate rulers, flip and turn to the point of saying: “I do not declare *takfir* upon whoever says he is a Muslim.” This is a mindless misconception.

If this was the path of guidance and truth, then why did as-Siddiq bother with fighting Musaylamah and those with him, to the extent that the best of the Sahabah, among the reciters, scholars, and people of the Quran, went out and were killed! The majority of those whom the scholars have ruled upon with *kufr* among the *murtaddin* were those whom the overwhelming majority of them attributed themselves to Islam and refused to be labelled with other than it.

The matter reaches to the level of implication that the one who says: “I am upon the *din* of Musa,” or says: “I am upon the *din* of Isa,” among the Jews and Christians, does not disbelieve. And this flows forth from the depths of misguidance and far off from the *din* of Allah, the Book of Allah, and the Sunnah of His messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). If it is said: “This is not acceptable, for they disbelieved after the advent of Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and the abrogation of their ways.” This necessitates that if they attributed themselves to Islam after the advent of Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and remained upon what they were brought up

on, their ignorant ones would be excused and be Muslim. And it would also imply that their ignorant ones were all Muslim believers before the advent of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and only disbelieved due to his advent; and this is obviously invalid and false.

What we just mentioned does not mean that we say there is no difference at all between the one who ascribes himself to Islam and the one who does not ascribe to it among the *mushrikin*. But simply the affiliation of a person to Islam after he has disbelieved had Islam affirmed outwardly upon him. Thus if he did not adhere to its rulings, or he committed acts of *kufr* that nullify the foundation of *tawhid*, then, he is judged with apostasy. However, as for the disbelieving groups that are raised upon this (i.e., *shirk*), affirming Islam for them due to their affiliation to Islam has two statements among the scholars. Some of them view that Islam is affirmed for them due to the affiliation, with apostasy being affirmed [after] due what they commit from actions of *kufr*, while others view that they are *kuffar asliyyin* (originally disbelievers), and that their affiliation to Islam is just like the affiliation of the *mushrikin* of Quraysh to the way of Ibrahim; and this is what is correct because what has preceded in not differentiating between both affiliations.²

And Allah knows best. May *salah* and *salam* of Allah be upon His slave and messenger Muhammad, and upon all of his household and companions.

² This is also the opinion of Shaykh ‘Ali al-Khudayr and others. It states in *Hukm ash-Shari‘ah fi Ta’ijah ash-Shi‘ah*: “A number of contemporaries think that this sect (i.e., the Rafidah) are *kuffar asliyyin*. But the matter is not as such. They are an apostate faction.” Thus you will find a slight dispute between *ahlul-haqqa* of today whether these groups are *kuffar murtaddin* or *kuffar asliyyin*, not whether they are excused because of their ignorance or not! (ed.)



أهل التوحيد

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